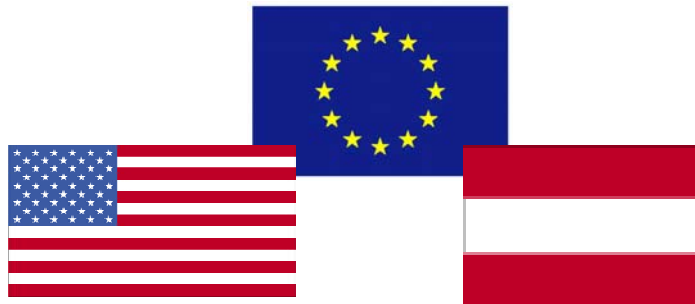


EU SPOTLIGHT

No. 3, February 2006



Österreich 2006 • Präsidentschaft der Europäischen Union
Austria 2006 • Presidency of the European Union
Autriche 2006 • Présidence de l'Union européenne



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U.S. GOVERNMENT ITEMS

[Review of European Security Issues](#)

Washington File, February 21, 2006

NATO and Munich Security Conference; Russia, NATO to share intelligence; NATO in Afghanistan; Kosovo status talks; MASH hospital to Pakistan; post-conflict reconstruction; narcotics agreement with Bulgaria

[Amb.-Designate Gray addresses east west institute security conference](#)

U.S. Mission to the European Union, February 21, 2006

The U.S. partnership with the European Union to address the threat of global terrorism is an essential component of its national security, Ambassador-designate C. Boyden Gray told the East West Institute's Third Annual Worldwide Security Conference in Brussels, Belgium, on February 21. In a speech called "How to Overcome Political Obstacles for a Truly Global Response," he focused on U.S.-EU cooperation in investigating and prosecuting terrorists, efforts to increase the sharing national security information for use in analysis, investigations and prosecutions, and cooperation on border and homeland security issues.

"I think it is evident that the EU and the U.S. provide a sterling example of working cooperatively to ensure our collective security and to deny terrorists the ability to threaten the lives of our citizens," he said. "Our challenge is to preserve the legal protections we extend to our citizens as we take the steps necessary to safeguard them against terrorist attack. This is a collective challenge, and it requires a collective response."

[Additional European Countries Report Bird Flu](#)

European Commission invoking precautions in northern, southern Europe

By Charlene Porter, Washington File Staff Writer, February 15, 2006

Washington -- The appearance of avian influenza in wild birds has been confirmed in several European nations in recent days. Germany, Slovenia, Italy, Bulgaria and Greece all confirm reports of a disease that has traveled from Southeast Asia.

Austria and Denmark continued laboratory testing February 15 to verify whether the disease also killed wild birds found in their jurisdictions.

The European Commission -- the policy implementation body for the European Union -- is calling for affected states to adopt precautionary measures, including the establishment of a 3-kilometer protection zone around areas where dead animals are found, and a surrounding surveillance zone of 10 kilometers in which poultry must be kept indoors and poultry movement is banned.

[Multinational Exercise Aims To Improve Post-Conflict Teamwork](#)

Stability and reconstruction "experiment" includes eight nations plus NATO

By Vince Crawley, Washington File Staff Writer, February 14, 2006

Washington -- The State Department and the U.S. military are teaming with seven countries plus NATO for a three-week exercise, beginning in late February, to practice closer cooperation when performing post-conflict stability and reconstruction missions.

More than 800 people will take part in the event, formally called Multinational Experiment 4. Much of the action will be simulated, but the experiment uses Afghanistan as its real-world model for a hypothetical series of events, officials said.

Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States will participate from training facilities in their own countries linked by computer networks. Those countries are NATO nations but plan to participate as a multinational coalition outside the formal NATO structure. In addition, NATO's headquarters and planning staff will participate in the exercise from a facility in Istanbul, Turkey. And Australia, Finland and Sweden will participate in the United States at the headquarters of the U.S. Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) in Norfolk, Virginia.

The European Union and the United Nations also will join the exercise as observers, said Barbara Stephenson, the director of planning for the State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization.

[MULTINATIONAL EXPERIMENT 4 \(MNE 4\), United States Joint Forces Command](#)

State's Fried discusses Cartoon Violence with EU, Danish, Muslim Leaders

U.S. Mission to the European Union, February 14, 2006

Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried discussed the Danish cartoon protests; the role of democracy in reconciling the values of tolerance, respect, sensitivity, freedom – including freedom of expression – and justice; and the election of Hamas during a media briefing in Brussels, Belgium, on February 14.

After a stop to express solidarity with his Danish counterparts in Copenhagen, Fried traveled to Brussels for talks with European Union officials and leaders of Belgium's Muslim community on dealing with the reaction generated by the cartoon. "



U.S. Urges EU Not To Reimpose Duties After WTO Tax Break Ruling **Sanctions threat said to jeopardize "harmonious" trans-Atlantic relations**

By Bruce Odessey, Washington File Staff Writer, February 13, 2006

Washington -- After the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled as inadequate a U.S. law repealing illegal export tax breaks, the Bush administration has criticized European Union (EU) intent to reimpose trade sanctions.

In its ruling issued February 13, the WTO Appellate Body said the 2004 law passed by the U.S. Congress repealing the tax breaks improperly continues them for two years, through 2006. Also improper, it said, is a "grandfather clause" continuing some tax breaks beyond 2006 that were included in business contracts signed before late 2003.

At issue were the Foreign Sales Corporation (FSC) and the successor Extraterritorial Income Act (ETI), which allowed certain U.S. exporters to exclude some of their trade-related profits from taxation. WTO had ruled against each program as violating a WTO agreement that prohibits certain government subsidies.

U.S. Believes Diplomacy Can Address Iranian Nuclear Threat, Rice Says **Regime can end isolation by returning to negotiations, cooperating with IAEA**

By Howard Cincotta, Washington File Special Correspondent, February 12, 2006

Washington -- The United States believes the international community is united in its determination to use diplomatic means to prevent Iran's development of technologies that can lead to nuclear weapons, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in two television news interviews February 12.

Iran is only isolating itself by rejecting negotiations and withdrawing its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rice said on *CBS's Face the Nation* and *ABC's This Week*.

"Iran has a path to a peaceful nuclear program," she said on *ABC's This Week*. "The Russians have given them a proposal. The Europeans gave them a proposal. There are many ways that they could seek a peaceful nuclear program."

INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS OF ABC'S THIS WEEK, Secretary Condoleezza Rice, February 12, 2006

INTERVIEW WITH BOB SCHIEFFER OF CBS'S FACE THE NATION, Secretary Condoleezza Rice, February 12, 2006

United States, Europe Share Common Vision for the Americas

U.S. Envoy Shannon says focus should be on common ground, not differences

Washington File, February 10, 2006

Washington -- The United States and the European Union (EU) share a common vision for Latin America and should work together with the nations of the Americas to consolidate democratic institutions, strengthen civil society and expand economic opportunity, says Tom Shannon, U.S. assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs.

In Brussels, Belgium, for talks with European Commission officials, members of the European Parliament, as well as officials of NATO and EU member state, Shannon touched on the importance of U.S.-European cooperation with Latin America as well as developments in the region in a February 1 interview with the Spanish newspaper *El Pais*.

[INTERVIEW WITH *EL PAIS*, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Tom Shannon, February 1, 2006](#)

[United States Envisions Global Partnerships for NATO](#)

Diplomat says relationships with Asian, other countries could help missions

By Vince Crawley, Washington File Staff Writer, February 10, 2006

Washington -- With NATO operating in parts of the world where it never operated before, the military alliance might start building new relationships with countries from Asia and elsewhere to make global missions more effective, says a senior official in the State Department's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs.

Kurt Volker, the bureau's second-in-command, said February 6 that if NATO continues such far-flung missions as heading up the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and participating in peacekeeping efforts in Africa, "maybe we should create some kind of relationship" with other countries that are likely also to take part in crisis missions, peacekeeping or humanitarian support.

[U.S. Officials Urge Congress Not To Block Airline Investment Rule](#)

U.S.-EU air transport liberalization depends on it, they tell House panel

By Andrzej Zwanecki, Washington File Staff Writer, February 8, 2006

Washington -- A "unique" opportunity to reach agreement on liberalizing air transport between the United States and the European Union (EU) is likely to be lost if Congress blocks a proposed regulatory change intended to allow more foreign investment in ailing U.S. airlines, Bush administration officials say.

John Byerly, deputy assistant secretary of state, suggested that the EU has made a long-sought open skies agreement between the two parties conditional on adoption of a proposed Department of Transportation (DOT) rule intended to expand opportunities for foreign citizens to invest in U.S. carriers and participate in their management.

[INFORMATION \(INCLUDING TESTIMONIES\) ON HEARING on "U.S.-E.U. Open Skies Agreement: with a focus on DOT's NPRM regarding 'actual control' of U.S. air carriers," Subcommittee on Aviation, Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives, February 8, 2006](#)

[WTO Upholds U.S. Challenge to European Ban on Biotech Food](#)

Preliminary ruling reportedly finds moratorium not based on scientific evidence

By Kathryn McConnell, Washington File Staff Writer, February 8, 2006

Washington -- The World Trade Organization (WTO) has ruled preliminarily in favor of the U.S. challenge of the European Union (EU) moratorium on approvals of agricultural crops derived from biotechnology, also known as genetically modified (GM) foods, according to published reports.

The United States, joined by Argentina and Canada in the challenge, had asserted the moratorium violates international trade rules and undermines the development and use of biotechnology. They had argued the ban was not based on scientific evidence and maintained that biotech crops are as safe to health and the environment as other crops.

[PRESS RELEASE](#) by US Trade Representative Rob Portman and U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns on Agricultural Biotechnology and the WTO, February 7, 2006

[TRANSCRIPT](#) of Amb. Richard Crowder's media session with agricultural reporters, February 8, 2006

[AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY](#), Office of the United States Trade Representative

[Turkey's EU Aspirations Can Inspire Muslims, U.S. Diplomat Says](#)

State's Bryza also discusses cartoon controversy, Cyprus proposal

By Vince Crawley, Washington File Staff Writer, February 8, 2006

Washington -- Turkey's ambition to join the European Union (EU) can show the Muslim world that it is possible to accomplish democratic reforms while respecting cultural differences, a U.S. diplomat said February 7 at a press roundtable in Brussels, Belgium, that also touched on the Cyprus peace process and the recent publication of inflammatory cartoons parodying Islam.

Turkey's eligibility for the European Union will be determined by EU members and by Turkey's ability to meet political and economic benchmarks, said Matthew Bryza, the deputy assistant secretary of state for southeastern Europe and Central Asia. "Of course, we want to do everything we can to keep Turkey's accession process on track," he added. Bryza said, "Turkey has a proud history of advancing secular democracy -- secular democracy in a predominantly Muslim society. In that sense Turkey is a unique country. Unique as a European country and as a partially Middle Eastern country, all at the same time."

[Current Allied Command Operations in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia](#)

General James Jones, NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) and US European Command (EUCOM) Commander

Foreign Press Center Briefing, Washington, D.C., February 8, 2006

...
QUESTION: Marco Bardazzi, Italy, the Italian news agency ANSA. General, in a hearing before a senate committee you said that NATO is exploring ways to protect Europe from terror attacks designed to disrupt energy deliveries. I was wondering if you could elaborate on this and how serious you think is the threat of attacks to the energy deliveries to Europe.

GEN JONES: I think that the NATO is certainly one of the topics that's being discussed in the European press and in the corridors of NATO is, in fact, how secure our common access to energy is. Is it vulnerable to disruption? If so, how? And in the context of examining how NATO might be useful to the common -- to the protection of the common security of our friends and allies, what kind of role could NATO play in that if it were asked to play a role in not only the protection of the delivery of energy but also the protection of our critical infrastructure.



[Press Roundtable on Upcoming Elections in Belarus](#)

With Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs

Washington, D.C., February 7, 2006

...
Ambassador Fried: ...

These are elections for Mr. Lukashenko's third term. The Belarusian constitution said he can only serve two terms but there was a referendum held several years ago which we also did not consider to have been conducted in a free and fair manner.

We support-- and the Congress has both authorized us and given us some money-- to support NGOs and civil society and a free and fair election process. There are American and European NGOs active in Belarus to that end. We do not have a position on whether Milinkevich or Lukashenko is more popular than the other. Our position is not to pick winners. Our purpose is to do what we can to promote a free and fair election. It is also true that the Belarusian opposition has united around Milinkevich. As far as I can tell, the opposition is a collection of different groups with different political views but they are now united around a platform of democracy and basically a kind of democratic patriotism. Milinkevich's little campaign card has the words "To love Belarus". That's what it says.

[Assistant Secretary Fried Pledges Solidarity with Denmark, Norway in Wake of Attacks](#)

Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs

Press Roundtable with Washington-based European Correspondents

Washington, D.C., February 6, 2006

Assistant Secretary Fried: First, let me express solidarity with and sympathy for the governments and people of Denmark and Norway in the face of the outrages committed over the weekend in Damascus and Beirut. I gather also that there has been an attack on the Austrian Embassy in Tehran.

The White House issued an unequivocal statement of support for Denmark and Norway in the face of the attacks on their embassies. We made clear that we held the Syrian government responsible for these violent demonstrations. We called in the Syrian Ambassador over the weekend so there could be no misunderstanding.

We also commend and support Prime Minister Rasmussen's responsible statements in recent days in which he has urged tolerance and respect for all faiths, as well as freedom of the press.

There is a debate about whether the cartoons should have been published. The right of press freedom is an absolute right. Right of press freedom brings the responsibility of editorial judgment, and my government doesn't give guidance to editorial boards. They work out these issues on their own. Editorial boards will make their own decision.

NATO Head Calls for Expansion of Strategic Partnerships

De Hoop Scheffer says progress on transformation will continue

Washington File, February 6, 2006

Washington -- NATO must engage in broader political dialogue, expand its strategic partnerships and reform its funding mechanisms, says its secretary-general, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer.

"In this new world, solidarity is the key," he said. "Political, military and financial solidarity."

De Hoop Scheffer, speaking at the Munich (Germany) Conference on Security Policy February 4, called on trans-Atlantic allies to bring more issues to the alliance for discussion, naming energy security as one topic for consultations.

In addition, he said, NATO should build closer links with democratic nations outside of Europe, such as Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Japan.

He described NATO's partnership nations -- "from Austria to Finland and from Armenia to Kazakhstan" -- as strategic assets. "We need to ensure that we have the closest possible partnership with those countries that can, and are willing to, help defend our shared values," he said.

Results of the IAEA Emergency Meeting on Iran - the U.S. View

Robert Joseph, Under Secretary for State for Arms Control and International Security

Foreign Press Center Briefing, Washington, D.C., February 6, 2006

...

UNDER SECRETARY JOSEPH: Well, I think what is necessary to stop Iran is a firm indication that the international community not only will speak to this issue, but will take whatever measures are necessary to convince Iran that it is in its interest to forego a nuclear weapons capability. Is that difficult? Yes. It's a very difficult thing to do. And what we've seen to date is a very determined Iranian regime, determined to acquire a nuclear weapons capability.

The diplomatic process is not a perfect one. It has taken a long time to move from the original vote in November of 2003, which found Iran basically in noncompliance without using the word "noncompliance," to the vote this past Saturday. But during this time, we have worked with the EU-3, we've worked with Russia, we've tried to give Iran every opportunity to resolve this issue through diplomacy and through negotiation.



Panel: Russia, Europe and the World -- Prospects for Cooperation on Global Security Issues

Robert B. Zoellick, Deputy Secretary of State, Munich Conference on Security Policy, February 5, 2006

...

Deputy Secretary Zoellick: ...we also have a very important transatlantic agenda - the unfinished work of 1989. It includes the integration, the development and the security of the new members of the European Union and NATO. It is finally determining the peaceful democratic place of the Balkans in Europe and the Euro-Atlantic community, as was discussed in the panel yesterday. It also means assisting the fragile new democracies in the European space, such as Ukraine and Georgia. And of very great importance, building a constructive relationship among Russia, the European Union, the United States and NATO.

Statement on U.S. Condemnation of Embassy Burnings in Syria

The White House, February 4, 2006

The United States condemns in the strongest terms the burning of the Danish and Norwegian Embassies in Damascus, Syria today, which also damaged the Chilean and Swedish Embassies. The Government of Syria's failure to provide protection to diplomatic premises, in the face of warnings that violence was planned, is inexcusable.

The State Department has told the Syrian Ambassador that Syria must act decisively to protect all foreign embassies and citizens in Damascus from attack. We will hold Syria responsible for such violent demonstrations since they do not take place in that country without government knowledge and support.

Atomic Energy Board Votes To Report Iran to U.N. Security Council

Bush, Rice welcome action, urge Iran to heed message from world community

Washington File, February 4, 2006

The decision of the International Atomic Energy Agency's board of governors to report Iran to the U.N. Security Council "underscores the concern of the entire international community" about Iran's nuclear ambitions, according to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

In a February 4 statement, she welcomed the action taken the same day by the board to place the Iran issue in the domain of the Security Council, and called on Iran "to heed the clear message" of the world community. Specifically, the secretary again urged Iran to:

- Suspend its uranium enrichment and processing activities,
- Cooperate fully with the IAEA, and
- Resume diplomatic negotiations.

PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT on IAEA Board Vote to Report Iran to U.N. Security Council, The White House, February 4, 2006

IAEA BOARD RESOLUTION ON IRAN, Secretary Condoleezza Rice, February 4, 2006

U.S. STATEMENT ON IRAN at the IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, February 2006, Ambassador Gregory L. Schulte

Belarus Relations

Press Statement, Sean McCormack, Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, February 3, 2006

The European Union and United States recall their wish to have closer and better relations with Belarus and reaffirm their determination to support democracy and civil society in Belarus.

In view of their shared concern at developments surrounding forthcoming Presidential elections, the European Union and the United States had agreed to make a joint high-level visit to Minsk to convey these concerns to the Belarusian government. In the event the Belarusian authorities did not issue visas allowing Robert Cooper, Director General for External and Political-Military Affairs of the Council of the European Union, and Dan Fried, US Assistant Secretary of State for Europe, to enter Belarus simultaneously. In view of this, the European Union and the United States decided to cancel the joint high-level visit.

We are both disappointed by the failure of the Belarusian authorities to take this opportunity to engage in an open and frank dialogue with the international community.

U.S. Government Calls Anti-Islamic Cartoons "Offensive"

But defends importance of freedom of expression for individuals, media

Washington File, February 3, 2006

Washington -- The U.S. government agrees with Muslims that European cartoons depicting Prophet Muhammad as a terrorist are "offensive," but protects the right of the media to publish such materials.

"We find them offensive. And we certainly understand why Muslims would find those images offensive," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said in his daily press briefing February 3.

"At the same time, we vigorously defend the right of individuals" to express views that the U.S. government may disagree with or condemn, he added.

EU Officials Assert Importance of Accord with U.S. on Belarus

U.S. congressional hearing examines March 19 Belarusian presidential elections

By Jeffrey Thomas, Washington File Staff Writer, February 3, 2006

Washington -- Officials from the European Union told a congressional hearing in Washington February 1 that it is essential the United States and Europe unite in responding to developments in Belarus before, during and after its March 19 presidential election.

The situation in Belarus is "grim" and the ability to choose the country's political leadership freely is "nonexistent," said Aldis Kuskis, a member of the European Parliament from Latvia who serves as vice chairman of the EU Parliamentary Delegation for Relations with Belarus.

The U.S. ambassador to Belarus, George Krol, similarly has characterized the prospects for a free and fair election in Belarus as "dismal."

Montenegro Referendum Will Set Tone for Relations with U.S., Europe

At OSCE, Scott urges free, fair vote on independence from Serbia

By Vince Crawley, Washington File Staff Writer, February 2, 2006

Washington -- The international community is closely watching Montenegro's expected referendum for independence from Serbia -- targeted for April -- to see how well the republic handles itself on the world stage, a U.S. diplomat says.

Any independence vote should be a "free and fair referendum reflecting the clear will of the Montenegrin electorate," said Kyle Scott, U.S. deputy representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), February 2.

The United States strongly supports a role for the OSCE and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to monitor the possible referendum, Scott told the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna, Austria. He spoke in response to a report by Miroslav Lajcak, personal envoy for Montenegro of the European Union's (EU) High Representative Javier Solana.

U.S. Adds New Welsh Grant to WTO Case Against Airbus Subsidies

USTR Portman views negotiated resolution as both possible and preferable

Washington File, February 2, 2006

Washington -- The United States has made an additional complaint in its World Trade Organization (WTO) challenge to European Union (EU) subsidies of Airbus, objecting to a new grant from Wales to the aircraft consortium.

"We still believe that a negotiated solution is possible," U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman said in a February 2 press release. "But one way or another, the subsidies need to end."

Portman said that even after nearly two years seeking to end subsidies for large civil aircraft production, the United States still would prefer a negotiated resolution with the Airbus consortium countries France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom.

FULL TEXT of press release "United States Files Additional Consultation Request in Airbus WTO Litigation," Office of the United States Trade Representative, February 2, 2006

Congress Passes Repeal of Dumping Law Ruled Illegal by WTO

Bill also abolishes cotton export subsidies to comply with WTO ruling

By Bruce Odessey, Washington File Staff Writer, February 1, 2006

Washington -- A bill including repeal of two U.S. programs ruled illegal by the World Trade Organization (WTO) has won final passage in Congress and heads to the president for signing into law.

One of the programs facing repeal, created by what is called the Byrd amendment, diverts anti-dumping and countervailing duty revenue to U.S. companies that bring dumping and subsidy cases. The other, called Step 2, provides export subsidies to U.S.-grown cotton.

The two provisions are part of a much larger legislative package aimed at reducing the federal government budget deficit. The bill bitterly divided both chambers of Congress with the House of Representatives approving final passage February 1 by only 216-214.

Senators passed the bill by 51-50 vote December 21, 2005, with Vice President Cheney breaking the tie. The House previously had passed the bill, but Senate deletion of three provisions forced the House to consider it again.

Press Group Outraged By Continued Cuban Harassment of Journalists

European Union urged to reconsider policy toward Castro regime

By Eric Green, Washington File Staff Writer, January 31, 2006

Washington -- A global press freedom advocacy group says it is "dismayed and outraged" by the Cuban government's "continuing harassment of independent journalists."

In a January 31 letter to the European Union (EU), the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders said independent journalists in Cuba are unable to work freely or defend themselves against the Cuban government's "state repression."

Reporters Without Borders said it wrote the letter as the EU prepared to debate the state of its relations with the regime of Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. In its letter, Reporters Without Borders calls on the Europeans to "seriously reconsider" their position on Cuba by resuming diplomatic initiatives aimed at supporting human rights and dissidents in that nation.

Reporters Without Borders addressed the letter to the Austrian government, the current holder of the rotating EU presidency.

Davos Meeting Pushes WTO Talks Toward Progress Across the Board

But action on agriculture central to development, USTR Portman says

By Andrzej Zwanecki, Washington File Staff Writer, January 28, 2006

Washington -- An informal meeting of trade, economic and commerce ministers from 18 countries and the European Union (EU) has created a sense that World Trade Organization (WTO) trade liberalization talks must advance in all areas for the negotiations to succeed, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Portman says.

The ministers meeting at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, set an April 30 deadline for agreement on modalities -- specific details and time frames -- for further WTO negotiations, officially known as the Doha Development Agenda and previously the Doha Development Round. The deadline needs to be formally approved by the broader WTO ministerial forum.

Turkey/EU/Cyprus: Proposal to Lift Port and Trade Restrictions

Press Statement, Sean McCormack, Spokesman, U.S. Department of State,
January 26, 2006

The United States welcomes Turkey's proposal on Cyprus as an expression of Turkey's willingness to advance a negotiated settlement of the Cyprus issue. The proposal is also consistent with the Secretary General's 2004 recommendations that the international community set the stage for future reunification through easing the isolation of Turkish Cypriots.

Progress toward a Cyprus settlement will require creative thinking and constructive dialogue. We welcome all proposals that seek to break the current deadlock, and hope that all parties will engage and remain flexible and creative. We encourage the Secretary General and the parties to take these ideas seriously in order to move the Cyprus settlement process forward.

The United States stands ready to assist the United Nations in this effort.

U.S. Hails International Partnership in Migration Management

Homeland Security official meets with Europeans on migration policies

Washington File, January 25, 2006

A U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official salutes international partners for working with the United States to facilitate legitimate travel while improving border security and inhibiting the movement of terrorists and criminals.

Homeland Security acting Assistant Secretary of Policy Development Elaine Dezenski spoke at a conference in Brussels, Belgium, January 24 on migration issues.

"The United States shares your goal of pursuing multilateral and regional solutions to the inherently international challenges of migration management," Dezenski told representatives from European Union nations.

In the Western Hemisphere, Dezenski explained how the Security and Prosperity Partnership among the United States, Canada and Mexico is working "to bolster economic competitiveness of the region while making it secure."

[European Parliament Warns of Human Trafficking at World Cup](#)

European body cites State Department report on trafficking problem

By Eric Green, Washington File Staff Writer, January 24, 2006

Washington -- The European Parliament is warning about the trafficking of women and children during the 2006 World Cup of Soccer, being hosted by Germany.

Soccer's world championship, in which teams from the United States and 31 other countries will compete from June 9 through July 9, is expected to attract not only soccer fans from all over the world but also traffickers of human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

The European Parliament, a body of the 25-nation European Union (EU), expressed its concern January 17 about the trafficking problem during the World Cup because prostitution is legal in certain zones of German cities. The tournament will be played in 12 German cities, ranging from Berlin to Stuttgart.

The January 17 statement calls on all EU member states, "especially Germany, to take appropriate measures in the course of the World Cup football tournament in 2006 to prevent trafficking of women and forced prostitution." The Parliament goes on to call for member states to enforce the law and strengthen prosecutions and punishments of traffickers, accomplices and those seeking sexual services from minors, as well as prosecuting money laundering of the proceeds from trafficking.

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CRS REPORTS FOR CONGRESS

Congressional Research Service/ Library of Congress

[U.S.-European Union Trade Relations: Issues and Policy Challenges](#)

Updated

Updated January 26, 2006

Major U.S.-EU trade challenges can be grouped into five categories: (1) complying with WTO rulings; (2) resolving longstanding trade disputes involving aerospace production subsidies and beef hormones; (3) dealing with different public concerns over new technologies and new industries; (4) fostering cooperative competition policies; and (5) strengthening the multilateral trading system.

[U.S.-EU Cooperation Against Terrorism](#)

Updated

Updated January 24, 2006

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks gave new momentum to European Union (EU) initiatives to improve law enforcement cooperation against terrorism both among its 25 member states and with the United States. Washington has largely welcomed these efforts, recognizing that they may help root out terrorist cells and prevent future attacks. However, the United States and the EU continue to face several challenges as they seek to promote closer cooperation in the police, judicial, and border control fields. This report will be updated as needed.

[The United States and Europe: Possible Options for U.S. Policy](#)

Updated

Updated January 23, 2006

This report assesses the present state of the U.S.-European relationship and the reasons for current frictions. To stimulate debate and for the purposes of analysis, it also offers a spectrum of possible options for U.S. policymakers in considering the future shape of the political and strategic dimensions of the transatlantic partnership.

[NATO and the European Union](#)

Updated

Updated January 3, 2006

This report addresses several questions central to the debate over European security and the future of the broader transatlantic relationship.

[The United States and Europe: Current Issues](#)

Updated

Updated December 28, 2005

The United States and Europe share a long and intertwined history. Despite the end of the Cold War, both sides of the Atlantic continue to face a common set of international concerns, have few

other comparable partners, and share a huge economic relationship. Nevertheless, numerous foreign policy and trade conflicts have seriously challenged U.S.-European relations in recent years. This report examines the current state of the transatlantic relationship and key issues in Europe and beyond that have implications for U.S. interests.

European Union Enlargement *Updated*

Updated December 27, 2005

On May 1, 2004, 10 states joined the European Union (EU), enlarging the Union to 25 members. The EU views the enlargement process as a historic opportunity to promote stability and prosperity in Europe. In addition to the 10 new members (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia), Bulgaria and Romania hope to accede to the EU in 2007. Turkey and Croatia began accession negotiations in October 2005. Macedonia was named as a candidate for EU membership in December 2005.

The European Union in 2006 and Beyond *Updated*

Updated December 27, 2005

The European Union (EU) has experienced significant changes over the last few years. The EU has enlarged from 15 to 25 members and has been working to implement a new constitutional treaty to institute internal reforms and further political integration. The EU has also taken steps toward developing a common foreign policy and defense arm. This report describes the current status of the EU's constitutional treaty, EU enlargement, the EU's evolving foreign and defense policies, and possible implications for U.S.-EU relations.

The European Union: Questions and Answers *Updated*

Updated December 27, 2005

This report provides answers to key questions related to the European Union (EU). It describes the EU's evolution, its governing institutions, trade policy, and efforts to forge common foreign and defense policies. The report also addresses the EU-U.S. and EU-NATO relationships.

The European Union's Constitution *Updated*

Updated December 27, 2005

In June 2004, the European Union (EU) concluded work on a constitutional treaty that contains changes to the EU's governing institutions and decision-making processes. Commonly referred to as the "constitution," this new treaty aims to institute internal reforms to enable a larger EU to operate effectively and prevent gridlock, but it must be ratified by all member states to enter into force. The future of the EU's constitution, however, has been thrown in doubt after French and Dutch voters rejected it in separate referenda in May and June 2005. This report provides background information on the constitution, its key provisions, the current crisis, and possible implications for U.S.-EU relations.

The European Parliament

Updated April 5, 2005

The 732-member, directly-elected European Parliament (EP) is a key institution of the 25-member European Union (EU). Once limited to being a consultative assembly, the EP has accumulated more power over time. Currently, it plays a role in the EU's legislative and budgeting processes, and exercises general supervision over other EU bodies. The EP continues to face several challenges, however, especially in relation to its democratic legitimacy and operational costs. The most recent EP elections were held in June 2004.

EU-U.S. Economic Ties: Framework, Scope, and Magnitude

Updated April 15, 2005

U.S. and EU policymakers will continually face the task of how to manage the increasingly complex bilateral economic relationship in ways that maximize benefits and keep frictions to a minimum. For Members of Congress it means weighing the benefits of greater economic integration against the costs to constituents in the context of overall U.S. national interests.

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MEDIA ITEMS

(If you are interested in receiving any of the articles listed below, please contact arc@usembassy.at)

Turkish Accession to the European Union: Challenges and Opportunities

By Paul Kubicek, *World Affairs*, Fall 2005

The challenges and opportunities presented by Turkey's bid for membership in the European Union is a heated topic of discussion, which reveals much about the deeper debate about competing visions of European identity. Kubicek provides an excellent primer for newcomers to the issue, and a spirited defense for membership from those critics who reject Turkey as "too big, too poor, too agricultural, too authoritarian, and, perhaps above all, too Muslim."

Trends: Waking Up Europe

By Martin Baily and Diana Farrell, *Milken Institute Review*, 1st Quarter 2006

The European Union is in crisis. Yes, you've heard that one before. But the latest bumps on the road to a more perfect economic and political union really could bring the integration process to a halt. The rejection of the EU's proposed constitution by France and the Netherlands last year was followed by a truly nasty meeting of its leaders that culminated in a stalemate on the allocation of the European Commission's \$120 billion budget.

[FULL TEXT](#) (pdf)

America's rising anti-Europeanism

By Peter van Ham, *Europe's World*, Spring 2006

For so long the unquestioning supporters of European integration, US policymakers nowadays see the EU in an increasingly unsympathetic light. Peter van Ham, of the Clingendael Institute in The Hague, charts the decline in transatlantic amity.

[FULL TEXT](#) (pdf)

Of Power and Providence

By David C. Hendrickson, *Policy Review*, February/March 2006

The historian of the early American federal union recognizes an immediate affinity between America's founding and the contemporary European project. Both are instances of an attempt to create a federative system, to ensure and perpetuate a basis for cooperation among independent republics in a political milieu in which multiple loyalties, identities, and interests and the centrifugal forces they produce are the commanding political fact. Such a union must guard against the rival dangers of international anarchy and despotic centralization both within itself and within the larger society of states. This objective constitutes, as it were, its reason of state, the narrow path between Scylla and Charybdis it must follow.

[FULL TEXT](#)

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THINK TANK ITEMS

[The Great EU Inquisition: Europe's Response to the U.S. Rendition Policy](#)

By Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., and James Jay Carafano, Ph.D.

WebMemo #988, The Heritage Foundation, February 6, 2006

"We do not have a war against terror." This extraordinary statement by a senior European Union (EU) official reflects the divide between Washington and Europe's leading political institutions over the fight against al-Qaeda. Despite three major terrorist attacks on European soil in the past three years (in London, Madrid, and Istanbul), many top European officials still do not grasp the magnitude of the terrorist threat. Instead, they are engaged in a campaign of pandering and grandstanding to delegitimize U.S. counter-terrorism efforts, especially the policy of rendition.

[Decadent Europe Revisited](#) (pdf)

By Gilles Andréani, Adjunct Professor, Paris II, Panthéon-Assas University

U.S.-Europe Analysis Series, The Brookings Institution, February 2006

The current deadlock in the European Union's constitutional process has provoked yet another period of deep euro-pessimism. It is worth noting that the concept of Europe has lived through similar periods in the past and survived them all, often growing stronger in the process. We need only re-read Raymond Aron's *Plaidoyer pour l'Europe décadente* (*In Defense of Decadent Europe*) published in 1976 to recall the dismal intellectual and strategic atmosphere of that moment: the stagflation, the appeal of Eurocommunism, and the apparent strategic ascendancy of the Soviet Union.

[The Future of Decadent Europe](#) (pdf)

By Tony Judt, Professor, New York University

U.S.-Europe Analysis Series, Center on the United States and Europe, The Brookings Institution, February 2006

The conventional wisdom holds that Europe today is economically or socially dysfunctional. In this view, Europe, with its long vacations and generous pensions, is in many ways a better place to live than the United States, but that can not last. Even if the European social model is desirable, it is unrealistic and sooner or later, doomed. This assertion of Europe's doom derives from the association of technological change and globalization with inevitability or necessity. The protected economies of Europe that we have grown so used to will no longer be possible—like it or not this change is going to be upon us. We can see the future because we can see the shape of the economic present.

[Cousins and Strangers: America, Britain and Europe in a New Century](#) (pdf)

A Brookings Center on the United States and Europe Briefing

With Chris Patten, Chancellor Oxford University, Former European Commissioner for External Relations, Former British Governor of Hong Kong

The Brookings Institution, February 3, 2006

CHRIS PATTEN: It's another cliché to think of the world in relation to one country owning a particular century, so unless you're French you might subscribe to the view that the 19th century was British.

Most of us accept that the 20th century was American. And the conventional assumption is that the 21st century will see American hegemony challenged by China and that we'll see a standoff or even a conflict between the two. I think that's an incredibly depressing and old-fashioned way of looking at history, and I simply don't believe it. I think that if we play our cards right, the next few years, the next decades, should be dominated by the ideas which we share in Europe and North America and the ideas which you have always embodied with such spectacular success: open markets, the rule of law, due process, participative democracy, and today, giving women a fair deal in our world.

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AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT ITEMS

Events

[Conference “Europe begins at home”](#)

St. Pölten, April 18-19, 2006

The Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU is co-organising the European Conference on Subsidiarity 2006 with the Austrian parliament and the Bundesland Lower Austria on 18 and 19 April 2006 in St. Pölten. At this conference entitled "Europe begins at home", representatives of the EU Member States, the European Commission, the European Parliament and other EU institutions together with experts will discuss the subsidiarity principle and the proportionality principle as well as better regulation in the framework of the European Union. The discussions will focus on the following themes:

- Citizen-based policies: the contribution of the regions and the local authorities
- Subsidiarity and proportionality: the role of parliaments

- Subsidiarity and better regulation

European Tourism Ministers' Conference

"Tourism - Key to Growth and Employment in Europe"

Vienna Hofburg, March 20-21, 2006

The European Tourism Ministers' Conference will bring together tourism ministers from the EU-25, the candidate countries, EFTA/EEA and West Balkan states, representatives from international and European organisations and the tourism industry to create a high level discussion forum in which to analyse growth and employment aspects and future tourism perspectives in Europe.

With a view to an innovative and coordinated approach to tourism discussions on a European level, Austria and Finland in cooperation with the European Commission undertook to prepare the event together. Austria is focusing on the topic of "Tourism and culture - partnership for growth and employment" and Finland on "Information and communication technologies - tool for growth and employment in tourism".

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Press Releases and Speeches

(for a complete listing of press releases and speeches please see:

<http://www.eu2006.at/en/index.html>)

Plassnik: "Begin interacting rather than existing side by side"

Meeting of the Danish Foreign Minister with leading representatives of the Islamic faith communities in Vienna at the invitation of the Austrian Foreign Minister, February 16, 2006

Vienna, 16 February 2006 - The Danish Foreign Minister, Per Stig Moeller, the leader of the Islamic Faith Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Reis-ul-Ulema Mustafa Ceric, the Grand Mufti of Syria, Ahmed Bader Eddin Hassoun, the President of the Islamic Faith Community in Austria, Professor Anas Schakfeh, and the Bishop of Lolland-Falster, Steen Skovsgaard (Church of Denmark) met for an informal exchange of views in the Foreign Ministry in Vienna today at the invitation of Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik.

The aim of this informal meeting was to seek together ways and means of reducing the tensions of the past days and to give new impetus to the dialogue between the religions in Europe and between Europe and the Muslim world. "This meeting has brought together round the table practical bridge-builders of the inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue

Bartenstein welcomes agreement in European Parliament on Services Directive

Result sets the course for further negotiations, February 16, 2006

Economics Minister and President of the Council Martin Bartenstein welcomed the vote in the European Parliament at first reading. The broad consensus with just under 400 votes was a good basis for the further work by the European Commission and the Council. He said the result "sets the course for further negotiations".

Plassnik: "Close and rich web of relations with Russia"

EU-Troika Foreign Ministers' meeting with Russia in Vienna, February 15, 2006

Vienna, 15 February 2006 - The EU-Troika Foreign Ministers' meeting with Russia was held in Vienna today. Participating in the meeting were Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, her Russian homologue Sergei Lavrov, the EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and the Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja. The subject of the talks was the current status of relations between the EU and Russia and important international topics, such as Iran and the Middle East peace process.

Plassnik on EU-relations to Iran

February 15, 2006

Vienna, 15 February 2006 - At the request of the Iranian side Foreign Minister Plassnik had a lengthy telephone conversation with her Iranian counterpart Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki on 14 February 2006.

Plassnik confirmed that Austria as EU Presidency was interested in a positive development of the EU's relations with Iran. However, she noted that this would depend on action by Iran to effectively address all the EU's areas of concern.

Plassnik conveyed to Minister Mottaki the position of the European Union on the issue of the resumption of enrichment activities in Natanz and urged Iran to reverse this measure as it represents an unnecessary escalatory step in a critical and decisive phase in the Iranian nuclear issue.

Address delivered by the Federal President of the Republic of Austria Heinz Fischer to the European Parliament

February 15, 2006

...

The negative outcome of the referendums held in two EU Member States has not only brought matters to a halt for the moment but has also put a huge damper on the pro-Europe mood. And moods do play an essential role in politics.

We are now in a phase of reflection, but this reflection must be made visible and audible in order to give people the opportunity to agree with or oppose to the ideas presented.

My personal reflection leads me to the conviction that it would be a mistake to lie down meekly and allow the project of a Constitutional Treaty to perish and to more or less escort it to the cemetery.

I also realise that there are powerful arguments against starting the entire procedure all over again. Which leads me to share the view of all those who believe that once this pause for reflection has come to an end, it would be useful to refocus in a mature manner and with fresh energy on the objectives of the Constitutional Treaty, which will also contribute to strengthening the EU's democratic parliamentary system. The Austrian EU Council Presidency is committed to making an effective contribution and to preparing the ground in this respect.

Statement by the Council Presidency: Confrontation between Iran and the international community

State Secretary Hans Winkler before the Plenary of the European Parliament

February 15, 2006

...

With the adoption of the Resolution of 4 February 2006, which refers the matter to the United Nations Security Council, the IAEA Board of Governors gave Iran a clear signal. The broad majority by which the Resolution was adopted is evidence that Europe's deep concern about Iran's nuclear programme is shared by the international community as a whole.

The EU by no means calls into question Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

The cause of this conflict lies in the fact that Iran has not as yet done enough to build the necessary confidence as to the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. On the contrary, over the past 18 years Iran has not declared to the IAEA a substantial part of its very extensive nuclear programme and to this day refuses to give the IAEA important information. In particular this concerns the extent of development of uranium enrichment technology and the area of "weaponisation", i.e. the militarisation of its nuclear programme.

Statement by the Council Presidency: Right to Freedom of Expression and Respect for Religious Belief

State Secretary Hans Winkler before the Plenary of the European Parliament

February 15, 2006

...

The controversy about cartoons which first appeared in a Danish newspaper is a regrettable development. We have seen violent demonstrations that have in some cases even led to deaths. Representations of the EU and its Member States have been attacked and damaged. Threats have been made against EU citizens and unacceptable boycott measures against EU States have also been threatened. The trust and good will built-up between the EU and Islamic States over decades appear to have been seriously undermined. In this situation, the Council Presidency's most pressing concern has been first and foremost to urge all States involved to see that EU citizens and EU property are protected from attacks in accordance with international law.

Plassnik rejects the "appalling" statements of the Iranian President

The EU is determined to pursue its efforts "for a dialogue between the cultures that is characterized by mutual respect", February 11, 2006

Vienna, 11 February 2006 - Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik has vigorously rejected renewed attempts by the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to deny the crimes of the holocaust as well as his demand to "remove" the State of Israel from the map.

"The fact that such completely unacceptable statements are continuously repeated should not make us acquiesce. These statements are, and they remain, appalling", said Plassnik.

"These statements are furthermore in complete contradiction with the efforts being made by numerous political and religious leaders who, after the events of the last few days, are working on all sides for a dialogue between the cultures that is characterized by mutual respect", added Plassnik.

Morak and Reding push the swift implementation of e-government services across Europe - the Internet must be accessible to all citizens

Trust in the Net and e-Government for all Europeans at the Viennese Museum of Modern Art, February 10, 2006

"The European Commission's "i2010" programme is an indispensable initiative for making it easier for all European citizens to take part in the Information Society. We want to make the Internet accessible to as many of the Union's citizens as possible. The Internet should be a technology for everybody. That is why we in the public sector in particular should endeavour to make all applications user-friendly and to offer electronic communication for transactions with the authorities quickly and unbureaucratically", said Secretary of State Franz Morak, speaking today, Friday, at a joint press conference with Viviane Reding, the EU's Information Society and Media Commissioner.

Plassnik: "A sign of the political consolidation in Kosovo"

Foreign Minister congratulates the new President of Kosovo, Fatmir Sejdiu, on his election, February 10, 2006

Vienna, 10 February 2006 - The Austrian Foreign Minister and EU Council President Ursula Plassnik congratulated Professor Fatmir Sejdiu on his election by the Parliamentary Assembly as President of Kosovo. "This election constitutes a test of democratic maturity in a decisive stage for the future of Kosovo," said Plassnik. "This decision is also a sign of consolidation of Kosovo's political life," continued Plassnik.

Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik in talks with Mustafa Barghouti, member of the Palestinian Legislative Council

February 9, 2006

Vienna, 9 February 2006 - Against the backdrop of the current developments in the Middle East, the Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik had a meeting with the newly elected member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Mustafa Barghouti (Independent Palestine list).

Both sides stressed the importance of the successful organisation of the Legislative Council elections in strengthening the democratic process in the Palestinian Territories.

"The elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council and the forthcoming elections in Israel are changing the fundamentals in the region. I hope that after this the two sides will be able to actively re-engage in the efforts to find a peaceful solution in the interest of their people", Plassnik commented

Joint Press Communiqué on the most recent contacts between Foreign Ministers Abdullah Gül and Ursula Plassnik

February 8, 2006

Vienna, 8 February 2006 - The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Turkey, Abdullah Gül, and Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, President of the Council of the European Union had an exchange of views as a continuation of their ongoing contacts on the tensions that have arisen following the cartoons incident. Both Ministers stressed that the freedom of expression is a fundamental right. At the same time, they agreed that due respect must be accorded to religious beliefs and convictions. Freedom of expression and respect for revered values do not contradict but complement one another.

[Presidency Statement on the demarche carried out in Tehran with regard to the visit of Iranian President Ahmadinejad to Damascus](#)

February 8, 2006

Vienna, 8 February 2006 - The Presidency carried out a demarche to the Iranian Foreign Ministry in Tehran on 5 February 2006 expressing the European Union's concern about President Ahmadinejad's meetings in Syria with representatives of Palestinian terrorist groups and calling upon Iran to end such links. The Presidency also called upon Iran to join the international consensus on the need for a two state solution to the Middle East conflict.

[Winkler: "Strategic partnership with Africa in the EU's interest"](#)

State Secretary Winkler has meeting with Portugal's Gomes Cravinho, February 8, 2006

Vienna, 8 February 2006 - "We cannot remain indifferent to the problems and conflicts of Africa, such as failed states, terrorism, aids and poverty-driven migration, and to the development of the individual countries", State Secretary Hans Winkler said at a meeting with the Portuguese State Secretary for Development Cooperation, João Gomes Cravinho. "A lasting solution requires coordinated action on the part both of Africa and the European Union." Today, with a share of 55%, the EU is the world's largest donor of public-sector development aid and thus has a leading role in combating poverty.

[Plassnik calls for "international consensus against violence"](#)

EU Presidency asks Javier Solana to contact the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), February 7, 2006

Vienna, 7 February 2006 - On Tuesday, 7 February Ursula Plassnik, in her capacity as President-in-Office of the Council of the EU, asked the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, to visit the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Jeddah (Saudi-Arabia). Mr. Solana is to explore with the OIC how best the latter can help reduce the tensions that have arisen in large parts of the Islamic world following the publication in some European media of cartoons featuring the prophet Mohammed.

[Winkler: "The fight against poverty requires a global strategy and sustained action"](#)

State Secretary Winkler meets for talks in London, February 6, 2006

"The complex forms of poverty call for the application of a multi-faceted policy that is part of a global strategy," said State Secretary Hans Winkler after his talks with Hilary Benn, UK International Development Secretary, and Lord David Triesman, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the UK Foreign Office. "We cannot eliminate world poverty from one day to the next, but we can set the course in that direction." With a share of 55%, the EU is the largest donor of public development aid in the world today, and thus plays a leading role in the war against poverty.

[Iranian Ambassador summoned to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs](#)

Secretary General presents note of protest, February 6, 2006

Vienna, 6 February 2006 - Today, the Secretary General at the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Johannes Kyrle, presented the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Vienna with the following note of protest:

"The absolutely unjustifiable attack with Molotov cocktails on the Austrian Cultural Forum, which caused considerable damage, and the attack on the Austrian embassy in Tehran are completely unacceptable.

[Speech by State Secretary Winkler "How is the Austrian Presidency addressing the EU's Constitutional Agenda" at the Wilton Park Conference on 6 February](#)

February 6, 2006

...

The Austrian Council presidency conceives its job not as "addressing the Constitutional Agenda" but rather as regrouping and trying to pave the way for a "new consensus". So to start with, we have to identify the problems which give rise to people's uneasiness and scepticism.

The debate about the Treaty on a Constitution as such was an interesting intellectual exercise, but ordinary people have other preoccupations than the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. I am of course aware that European issues do not look exactly the same on either side of the Channel but I would assume that the worries on peoples' minds do not differ that much. To put it in a nutshell: what matters most to citizens is to find concrete solutions for concrete problems they face in their everyday lives - in particular against the change of challenge due to globalization and global economic interdependencies.

Interview with Austrian Foreign Minister Plassnik

Austrian EU presidency sets sights on first stage of Turkey accession talks, February 3, 2006

Austria has taken the reins of the European Union presidency for the first half of this year, coordinating the politics of the EU's 25 member states. In Salzburg, the birthplace of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Euronews met Ursula Plassnik, the Austrian Foreign Minister and member of the conservative ruling party. Towering at 1.9 metres, she's often joked that her head may be in the clouds, but her feet are firmly on the ground. She's helping to steer her country's presidency at a crucial time - kick-starting a fresh debate on the EU constitution and tackling issues around enlargement.

Plassnik: "A broad array of topics connects China and the EU"

Foreign ministers' meeting of the EU Troika with China in Vienna, February 3, 2006

Vienna, 3 February 2006 - The Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the EU Troika with China took place in Vienna today. Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik hosted her Chinese counterpart, Li Zhaoxing, the High Representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, the EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and the Finnish Foreign Minister, Erkki Tuomioja.

"The EU and China are strategic partners. This partnership is supported by common interests, but also by openness, mutual understanding, and respect. This is also the case for topics on which our opinions differ," declared Foreign Minister Plassnik.

Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik as Presidency of EU made today the following declaration

February 2, 2006

Vienna, 2 February 2006 - The Presidency of the European Union condemns the wave of attacks and threats against European citizens and property, which has today culminated in attacks against the offices of the European Union and Member States in the Palestinian territories and in the arson attack against the Danish, Swedish and Norwegian embassies in Damascus. Such acts can by no means be legitimised and are utterly unacceptable.

The Presidency of the European Union demands that all authorities concerned take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of European citizens and property.

In this moment of tension, the Presidency of the European Union urgently calls on all concerned to show restraint and to refrain from and prevent further violence.

Council President Schüssel: "200 million Europeans will benefit from this agreement"

February 2, 2006

On Wednesday evening, Council President and Federal Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel presented the compromise reached in the dispute on reduced VAT rates in the Federal Chancellery together with Finance Minister Karl-Heinz Grasser, the Polish Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Zyta Gilowska, and EU Commissioner László Kovács.

"We have reached a compromise that represents an important success at the beginning of the Austrian Presidency. We discussed this difficult issue in a positive spirit and solved it together. 200 million people in Europe will benefit from this agreement", Schüssel said.

Plassnik: "EU and OSCE – together for security, human rights and good neighbourliness"

Foreign Minister's speech at the Permanent Council of the OSCE, February 2, 2006

Vienna, 2 February 2006 - The European Union should mesh more closely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in order to promote the peaceful interaction of all the

participating States and to strengthen their confidence in the OSCE: this was the core message of the speech Foreign Minister Plassnik gave at the Permanent Council of the OSCE.

"In spite of their differences, the EU and OSCE have in common the fact that they are communities based on values. Their interests and goals in terms of political stability and fostering democracy and human rights in Europe coincide to a large extent", the Foreign Minister said.

Winkler: "The path to a peaceful future is now in the hands of the Palestinians"

State Secretary Winkler at the plenary session of the European Parliament in Brussels, February 2, 2006

Brussels, 2 February 2006 - In the plenary session of the European Parliament held on Wednesday afternoon in Brussels, State Secretary Hans Winkler informed the Members of the conclusions drawn on the situation in the Middle East by the General Affairs and External Relations Council on Monday. With regard to the results of the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council he said: "All observers commented positively on the Palestinian elections". An EU election observation delegation had described the elections as free and fair and the atmosphere as quiet and positive. "As in any democratic election, the election result represents the will of the people. However, it poses many questions, not only for the international community and the Palestinian population but also for the whole region," continued Winkler.

Plassnik chairs EU Troika meeting with Afghanistan

February 1, 2006

London, 1 February 2006 - Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik had talks on Tuesday with her Afghan counterpart, Abdullah Abdullah, in the framework of the EU Foreign Ministers Troika. The meeting of the Troika, at which the EU High Representative Javier Solana, Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner and the Finnish Trade Minister Mari Kiviniemi were present in addition to Plassnik, took place in the margins of the international Afghanistan conference in London.

Austria focuses on clean air and sustainable development

EP Environment Committee: Minister Pröll seeks agreement on Clean Air Directive by June, February 1, 2006

...
On Tuesday, 30 January, Environment Minister Josef Pröll further outlined his targets for Europe's sustainable development. At the European Parliament's Environment Committee in Brussels, the Minister pointed out that he wished to see the new "Directive on Air Quality and Clean Air for Europe" adopted by June this year. "Improving air quality is one of the priorities of the Austrian Presidency", said the Minister. Sustainable development and new regulations to govern the cultivation of genetically modified organisms (GMO) will also be among the topics covered.

Presentation of the Austrian Presidency Programme at the Development Committee (DEVE) of the European Parliament by State Secretary Winkler

January 31, 2006

...
I should like to take this opportunity to set EU action on development, and the tasks before us, in a broader context. I should like to stress at this point that this action is the result of joint efforts by the EU Member States, the European Commission and, especially, the European Parliament. The United Nations Millennium Declaration contains eight development goals: for the first time, the Heads of State or Government have set precisely quantifiable development goals, and laid down a timetable for reaching them. As a result, this Declaration has galvanised our joint development efforts.

Presentation of the Presidency Programme by Federal Minister Gastinger, European Parliament, Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI)

January 31, 2006

...
As you know, the Hague Programme, together with the European Commission's action plan which builds on it, lays down the policy guidelines for our action at European level. The approach adopted in the Programme of mutual recognition of judgments is an efficient means by which the rights of citizens can be protected and enforced across European borders. This principle is

preferable to the harmonisation approach, because it takes into account the distinctive features of national legal systems while nevertheless leading, in its concrete forms, to the citizens of the Union experiencing Community law as a real help in their everyday life and thus developing a shared legal awareness. That is precisely what must form a central concern of our work at European level. Community legal acts are not an end in themselves, but must always be drawn up with an eye to their usefulness for our citizens. Only when we succeed in creating simpler, faster and less expensive procedures will citizens recognise the added value of our efforts in this area too, and be willing to give support to the European idea.

Plassnik: "There is no place for violence and terror on the road to democracy"

During the Council of Foreign Ministers, Council President Plassnik called upon Hamas to renounce violence and recognise Israel's right to exist, January 30, 2006

Brussels, 30 January 2006 - On Monday, 30 January, the first meeting of the Council for General Affairs and External Relations was held in Brussels and chaired by Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik. In addition to presenting the Presidency's programme, priority was given to the current topics of Belarus, the situation in the Western Balkans, the Middle East and Iran.

Speech by State Secretary Franz Morak, European Parliament, Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE)

January 25, 2006

...
The new strategic framework "i2010 – a European information society for growth and employment", adopted by the Commission in June 2005, was the first concrete action of the new Lisbon strategy. Both the Council and the European Parliament gave a very positive response to the i2010 strategy. In its i2010 Conclusions of 1 December 2005, the Council stressed that Member States, the European institutions and all other stakeholders share responsibility for the i2010 strategy, and set the overall policy agenda for the years ahead. This includes concrete action to be taken by all those involved in the process. Our primary aim is to establish conditions which will make sustainable and effective implementation possible.

Presentation of the Presidency Programme by Social Affairs Minister Haubner, European Parliament, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)

January 25, 2006

...
Last year, after the referendums in France and the Netherlands against the draft European constitutional treaty and the tricky agreement on the financial perspective, there was often talk of a crisis in the European Union. The British Presidency reacted to it with a very wide-ranging debate on the future of Europe, which culminated in the summit of Heads of State and Government at Hampton Court.
The Austrian Presidency will also continue discussions on the future of the European social model during these six months. The objective must be to examine in much greater depth people's needs, particularly unemployment and fighting poverty and social exclusion, as by far the most important priorities – as many surveys have stated.

Presentation of the Austrian Presidency Programme at the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) of the European Parliament by State Secretary Morak

January 24, 2006

...
When we, as those politically responsible, worry over the future of Europe, I become firmly convinced that culture unites and creates identity. Culture and creativity form the basis of European thought and action.
I see our role as supporting these creative processes by deploying the appropriate instruments and providing the right conditions.
The best instruments, however, can only achieve their purpose if adequate budgetary provision enables them to operate effectively. We are all aware that this objective has not been taken into account in the current budget proposal. Even though we have calculations which indicate less dramatic consequences, we all agree that we need to work on the figures.

**Presentation of Presidency Programme by Social Affairs Minister Haubner,
European Parliament, Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)**

January 24, 2006

...

It is of particular consequence for the Austrian Presidency that young people's issues should receive greater attention in all areas.

The main aim is to offer young people prospects, both at work and in society.

It is important for me that we should turn words into deeds for young people: employment, education and participation, as well as integration and mobility are the main priorities already established in the Youth Pact.

**Speech by Federal Minister Gastinger at the European Parliament, Committee on
Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)**

January 24, 2006

...

The first big event for the Ministers responsible for Justice and Home Affairs was their informal meeting in Vienna from 12 to 14 January 2006, where two important matters in the field of criminal law were addressed. They held a detailed discussion on further development of European criminal law and the fundamental rights of citizens, as well as the matter of briefing the JHA Council on JHA-related matters in other Council configurations.

The fundamental rights of citizens are also addressed in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, which has already been ratified by Austria. The area of freedom, security and justice is described as follows: "the Union shall constitute an area of freedom, security and justice with respect for fundamental rights and the different legal systems and traditions of the Member States"(Article III-257(1)).

**Presentation of the Presidency Programme by Federal Minister Liese Prokop,
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)**

January 24, 2006

...

One of the key demands made of the EU by its citizens is to ensure greater security for every individual and thereby develop further the area of freedom, security and justice.

In order to fulfil those expectations on the part of our citizens, we need to find specific ways of dealing with the threats posed to our security by terrorism, organised crime, corruption, drugs and illegal migration.

**Speech of Finance Minister Karl-Heinz Grasser addressed to the Members of the
Economic and Monetary Committee of the European Parliament**

January 23, 2006

...

Europe faces major challenges both on the political as well as on the economic side; I am convinced that Europe will be able to tackle these challenges successfully. It is our common task and responsibility to put growth and employment on top of our agendas; and it is our common task and responsibility to ensure incomes and prosperity as well as fair and attractive life and working conditions. This requires a much more pro-active approach to globalisation. We also have to ensure that the opportunities of globalisation will be used in the best way. We have to provide answers to the fears of our citizens and we have to bring Europe closer to them.

The Austrian Presidency wants to contribute to meeting these challenges. We want Europe's potential, its capabilities and innovative powers to be used more efficiently. For this we need the support of the European Parliament, and we also need a close co-operation between the European Parliament and the Council.

Plassnik: "Rapid adoption of EU Action Plan for Georgia"

Foreign Minister meets with Georgian counterpart Bedzhuashvili, January 19, 2006

Vienna, 19 January 2006 - Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik met with her Georgian counterpart Gela Bedzhuashvili for talks in Vienna. Their meeting focused on the European Neighbourhood Policy and regional development in South Caucasus.

"As a partner in the European Neighbourhood Georgia is one of those states with which the Union maintains special relations. Austria will urge for the rapid adoption of the EU Action Plan within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy," said the Foreign Minister.

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USEFUL LINKS

Government pages

- **U.S. – EU/ U.S. Embassy website**
http://www.usembassy.at/en/policy/us_eu.htm
- **U.S. – EU Relations/ Bureau of International Information Programs**
http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/europe_eurasia/us_eu_relations.html
- **Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs/ U.S. Department of State**
<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/>
The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, headed by Assistant Secretary Daniel Fried, implements U.S. foreign policy in Europe and Eurasia. The Bureau promotes U.S. interests in the region on issues such as national security, NATO enlargement, coordination with the European Union and other regional organizations, support for democracy, human rights, civil society, economic prosperity, the war on terrorism, and nonproliferation.
 - **European Union** - <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rt/eu/>
- **Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU** -
<http://www.eu2006.at/en/index.html>
- **The United States Mission to the European Union** - <http://www.useu.be/>
- **Delegation of the European Commission to the USA** -
<http://www.eurunion.org/>
- **Europe – Gateway to the European Union**
http://europa.eu.int/index_en.htm
- **Eurobarometer**
http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index_en.htm

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Selected U.S. media with EU section

- **The Washington Post**
International/ Europe: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/world/europe/index.html>
- **The New York Times**
International/ Europe:
<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/world/europe/index.html>
- **CNN**
Europe: <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/archive/>

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Selected Austrian media with EU section

- **Der Standard**
European Union: <http://derstandard.at/?url=/?ressort=EU>
- **Die Presse**

Europe: <http://www.diepresse.com/taneu/eu.htm>

- **Wiener Zeitung**

Europe:

<http://www.wienerzeitung.at/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=3857&Alias=wzo>

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Additional sites

- **EUpolitix:** <http://www.eupolitix.com/EN/>
- **EurActiv** – EU Policy News and Links: <http://www.euractiv.com/>
- **Eubusiness** – European Business News Online: <http://www.eubusiness.com/>
- **EU Reporter:** <http://www.eureporter.co.uk/>
- **EU Observer:** <http://euobserver.com/>
- **EuropaWorld:** <http://www.europaworld.org/>

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